DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 105 EC 302 859

AUTHOR	Bartlett, Lucy E.
TITLE	Student Evaluation of Tutors: The Development of an Evaluation Form.
PUB DATE	Feb 92
NOTE	33p.; Ed.D. Practicum Report, Nova University.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College Students; Evaluation Methods; Higher Education; *Learning Disabilities; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; Teacher Evaluation; Teacher Student Relationship; Test Construction; *Tutorial Programs; Tutoring; *Tutors
IDENTIFIERS	Brenau University GA

ABSTRACT

This practicum study developed a form for the evaluation of tutors by college students with learning disabilities at Brenau University (Georgia). Consultation with 15 experts in the field of college tutoring and a literature search led to the identification of 14 traits best evaluated by students. The evaluation form was developed and field tested by 18 students. The form was then revised considering the input of tutors, the outside experts, and the students. The evaluation form is recommended for use at mid-term, with follow-up consultations for improvement of tutoring. The evaluation form itself is appended. (Contains 17 references.) (DB)

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STUDENT EVALUATION OF TUTORS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVALUATION FORM

Human Resource Management

by

Lucy E. Bartlett, M.S. in Ed.

Brenau University

John A. Morgan, Ed. D
Greenwood Cluster

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A Practicum presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

February, 1992

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STUDENT EVALUATION OF TUTORS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVALUATION FORM

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The purpose of this study was to identify the traits and behaviors of tutors for students with learning disabilities that are best evaluated by students and to develop an evaluation form to be used by these students in mid-term evaluations of their tutors. The institution did not have a standard evaluation of tutors by students prior to the development of this instrument.

Brenau is an independent academic community with three divisions: The Women's College, The Professional College, and The Academy. Both The Women's College and The Academy have programs called The Learning Centers that are tutorial programs for students with learning disabilities who are mainstreamed in the regular programs of the institution.

The form (included in the appendix) was developed after consultations with fifteen experts in the field of college tutoring and a thorough search of the literature to identify the traits that were best evaluated by students. The form was evaluated for validity by internal and external

evaluators. It was then field tested by eighteen students. The form was revised considering the input of the tutors, the outside experts, and the students.

It is recommended that the form be used at mid-term in each Learning Center with follow-up consultations for improvement of tutoring. The information gained can also be used to plan staff development programs, for personnel decisions, and to communicate to parents, educational consultants, and accrediting agencies the level of expertise of the tutors at Brenau.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"Brenau is an independent academic community with three divisions: The Women's College, The Professional College, and The Academy." The Women's College offers an established program, named The Learning Center, for young women with learning disabilities (Brenau Bulletin, 1990). The Academy Learning Center for students with Learning Disabilities opened Fall Semester 1991 (Booth, 1991). The programs operate on a tutorial model designed to provide support services for learning disabled students. Each student enrolled in a Learning Center may receive tutoring in as many as two classes. Tutoring is done on a one-to-one basis in a particular subject. Tutors normally have at least a bachelor's degree and are hired for their expertise in the subject they are tutoring (Yamilkoski, 1991).

These students may also receive additional instruction in reading, writing, or mathematics, in organizational skills, or in study skills. Each student receives weekly counseling, and may take untimed tests. These students meet the same class and academic standards as all other students enrolled in The Women's College or The Academy (Yamilkoski, 1991; Booth, 1991).

Nature of the Problem

At the start of this project, there was no formal evaluation of tutors. The Tutor's Advisory Council of The Women's College Program (1990, 1991) requested at each meeting for over a year that students anonymously rate their tutors each quarter. These tutors regularly stated that this information would be helpful to the tutors who wish to improve their tutoring skills. Additionally, this evaluation can provide information on areas that need improvement to those who are responsible for staff development and provide a forum for sharing ideas on improving tutoring. So that evaluations would be valid, the rating form that has been developed has been evaluated for validity by internal and external evaluators.

The Purpose of the Investigation

This development study provided information on the traits of tutors that foster academic success in adolescent and young adult students with learning disabilities. A rating form for student use in evaluating tutors was developed based on these traits. This rating form is being used by students in both Learning Centers to evaluate their tutors each quarter or semester.

Research Question

What tutoring traits that foster academic success can best be evaluated by students and should be included in a rating form for student evaluation of tutors?

Significance to the Institution

Used consistently each quarter or semester, this rating form provides information as to student satisfaction with the tutoring they are receiving. This information is being used to help tutors improve their tutoring, to make personnel decisions, and to communicate with parents, educational consultants, and accreditation teams regarding the expertise of the tutors in the programs.

Relationship to the Seminar

Student evaluation of tutors can provide valuable information for the development of the tutors' skills. Because a valid and reliable evaluation form is essential before students can evaluate their tutors, the form produced by this practicum will allow The Brenau Learning Center students to evaluate their tutors, will give feedback to tutors on areas that need improvement, and will allow for the sharing of ideas that are successful. By using this form for a mid-semester or mid-quarter evaluation, problems can be corrected while the student who did the evaluation can still benefit. By producing a tool to improve tutor effectiveness and training, this practicum will relate to the Human Resource Development Seminar.

This practicum also relates to the specialization: Curriculum and Instruction. It deals with improving the learning environment of adults with learning disabilities.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature was reviewed for information on student evaluation of college level instructors, for tutoring strategies for students with learning disabilities, and for evaluation forms for students to evaluate their tutors.

Student Evaluations of Instructors

Many articles and documents are available for the evaluation of college teachers by students. Cohen's Meta-Analysis is particularly informative as it summarizes the research until 1982. An article by Pulich (1984) details the need to tailor the evaluation to the requirements of the topic being evaluated.

Need for Follow-up Consultations

Jacobs (1988) and Marlin (1987) both found that students want to evaluate their instructors and believe that they are competent to do so. In Marlins's study (1987) most students reported they do not think that teachers change their performance as a result of the end of class evaluations. One student requested that students be allowed to evaluate teachers at mid-term as well as at the end of the term so that they could benefit from changes brought about

by their evaluation. Several authors (Cohen, 1982; Aleamoni, 1983; Wilson, 1986 and McKeachie, 1986) find that consultations following student evaluations produce the greatest changes in instructional effectiveness. Cohen (1982) states that feedback at the mid-term and again at the end of the term produced significant gains, raising the ratings by about four tenths of a standard deviation.

Aleamoni (1983:6) hypothesizes that "instructional development and improvement is facilitated when an accessible system of instructional support is available to the instructor." In his original study, twenty instructors received feedback and consultation and thirteen received feedback only. "Instructors receiving consultation displayed marked gains in the evaluation rating from the pretest to the posttest period" (Aleamoni, 1983:10).

Aleamoni (1983:7) did a follow-up study ten years later using thirteen of the original twenty in the feedback and consultation group, and seven of the original feedback only group. Instructors who originally received consultation utilized support systems much more often in the next ten years than those who received feedback only. The original consultations altered the instructor's strategies for instructional change. The results of this follow-up study indicate that instructional intervention may produce long-term effects in instructional effectiveness.

Traits Best Evaluated by Students

Wilson (1986:206) found

> the more behavioral, specific, or concrete a suggestion is, the more easily it can be implemented by a teacher and the more likely it is that it will affect students' perceptions of his or her teaching.

McKeachie (1986: 281) cautions "students cannot judge all aspects of teaching effectiveness well." The student evaluations are highly valid in areas of attitudinal and motivational goals of education. They are reasonably valid as indices of achievement of cognitive goals. Items that address more specific teaching behaviors are more easily modified than general course and instructor characteristics.

Tutoring Strategies

The literature of the discipline of teaching adolescents and young adults with learning disabilities contains some general advice on successful teaching and tutoring strategies. Cruickshank, Morse, and Johns, (1980) report that private schools that are successful with students with learning disabilities use a consistent program, frequent evaluation of student progress, and reinforcement of language skills. These schools make a decision as to appropriate programs and stick to them, changing only when periodic assessment reveals no gains. Personnel of private school programs act as if they have a responsibility both to find the appropriate method and to match it to the student's learning differences. They require a large production of written language, and students are expected to read material that is within their grasp.

Students with learning disabilities rarely learn intuitively, inductively, and incidentally.

> "The generalizations, concepts, cognitive structures, and facts that other students seem to pick up without any specific instruction have, for some reason, not been acquired by these students" (Hammill and Bartel 1986:6)

Phillips (1991) stresses the need for patience and understanding. She states that there must be no hint of frustration or rejection in tutors' voices. Students with learning disabilities are super-sensitive to tone of voice and facial expression. She also states, "A gentle sense of humour and a good ability to relate to people are the oil that eases the LD student's uptightness about being taught something he 'cannot' learn" (Phillips, 1991:2).

Woodward (1981) states there is no best teaching style, no best teaching method, and no best materials. For each person, individual needs determine the best style, methods, and materials for that particular student. Often the adult student will know a great deal about her best learning style and how to adapt to the demands of the classroom.

Woodward (1981) emphasizes that punishment rarely works with a student with learning disabilities. They often lack tolerance for anything that does not offer immediate reinforcement. They do need immediate feedback as to the social consequences of irrational behavior. This feedback must be given in a depersonalized manner.

Often for students with learning disabilities, the problem is not the content but the organizing of material,

the structuring of time, and knowing when and how to ask for help. Tutors must emphasize these skills as they work with their students.

> Adolescents need adult models who exemplify sound behavior . . . they need adults who act on the basis of principles; models who both enjoy life and have mastered its trials reasonably well (Cruickshank, Morse, and Johns, 1980:28).

Tutors must model the behaviors they expect from their students.

Evaluation Forms

No rating forms for evaluating tutors in programs for students with Learning Disabilities are available through the ERIC abstracts or have been found in the books on adolescents and young adults with learning disabilities. Eight rating forms for student evaluation of tutors were located by contacting colleges and universities identified as having programs that serve students with learning disabilities. Some of these programs serve any student of the institution in need of assistance. Others serve any student with a disabling condition. None reported evaluation forms specifically designed for students with learning disabilities to use to evaluate their tutors.

The Eastern New Mexico University Tutoring Handbook (Cameron and Craig, 1991), contains a tutor self-evaluation form as well as a student evaluation form. Additionally, it clearly states the university's expectations of the tutors and identifies the tutor's responsibilities and ethical code. The Brenau Learning Centers' Tutor's Handbook

(Bartlett, 1991) contains the policies of the Learning Centers, materials on the characteristics of students with learning disabilities, and strategies for dealing with these students in the tutoring situation.

Summary

In summary, the literature contains information regarding student evaluation of college professors which has been studied to find common characteristics between evaluating teaching and evaluating tutoring. It also contains information as to how to best teach and tutor students with learning disabilities. No information was found in the literature search on student evaluation of tutors. Other educational institutions who use tutorial models to assist their students have been a major source of information for the completion of this study.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The first three chapters in the Tutor's Handbook, manual for tutors to use as they work with their students, (Bartlett, 1991) contains a summary of the philosophies that apply to educating adolescents and young adults with learning disabilities, characteristics of the students with learning disabilities, and the formal policies of the Learning Centers. As the first procedural step, a list of the behaviors expected of tutors in both Learning Centers was prepared from this material.

Second, educational institutions with tutoring programs for students with learning disabilities were contacted. Institutions were chosen from those that had responded to questionnaires and requests for information in studies reported in journal articles dealing with programs for college students with learning disabilities. Institutions that had responded to three or more of the articles reviewed were contacted by mail. Twenty-two institutions as well as three individuals formerly connected with the Brenau program for students with learning disabilities were contacted.

A copy of the Brenau form used for student evaluation of professors was obtained. This form was examined for any characteristics that also pertain to tutors. Characteristics that pertain only to classroom instruction were not considered.

Third, information contained on the forms received was tabulated and compared with the expectations contained in the Tutors' Manual. From this, a list of the tutoring traits that contribute to the academic success of adolescents and young adults with learning disabilities was prepared. These traits were then compared to the traits listed as best evaluated by students (Wilson, 1986: McKeachie, 1986). Items best evaluated by students were retained in the list of traits.

From this information, a draft of the rating form using positive statements was prepared. A five point Likert Scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" was provided for each statement Additional space was provided for comments. The forms contain no request for student identification.

As the fourth procedural step, the rating form was validated. Three members of the 1990-1991 Tutors' Advisory Council of The Women's College Learning Center, three tutors who have not served on the advisory council, the director of the Brenau Women's College Learning Center, and three persons from other programs previously contacted were interviewed. They were asked to validate the evaluation forms for appropriateness, clearness, and completeness. Suggestions for improvement were requested.

The evaluation form was field tested on ten students who have received at least three quarters of tutoring in The Women's College Learning Center, four freshmen who requested

to help field test the form, and four Academy students. The students were asked for comments on the clarity and appropriateness of the items, which were the most important items, which could be omitted, should anything be added, and for any other suggestions they had as to how the evaluation form might be improved. The evaluation form was revised according to the comments of the students, the critiques of the tutors, and the responses from other programs.

When completed, the proposed evaluation form was reviewed with the 1991-1992 Tutor's Advisory Council and the Director of The Women's College Learning Center for final revision, approval, and implementation. The form was approved as revised and was implemented for the Fall Quarter of 1991 in The Women's College Learning Center and for the Fall Semester of 1991 in The Academy Learning Center.

Definition of Terms

Tutor's Advisory Council: A group of tutors who meet once a quarter with the Director of The Women's College Learning Center to discuss concerns and problems in the Learning Center.

Tutors: Persons who work with students in the Learning Center on a one-to-one basis in a particular subject. These tutors have at least a bachelors degree and are hired for their expertise in the subject they are tutoring.

Limitations

Because the literature contains no rating forms for tutors, the information received from other educational

institutions was of major importance in developing this form. The form might have been improved by contacting all six hundred colleges and universities who report having a program for students with learning disabilities or by a random sampling with a far larger number of contacts.

Assumption

A strong recurring strand throughout the literature suggests that student evaluations of faculty followed by consultations by peers or supervisors improves instruction (Cohen 1982). Because of the similarities in instruction and tutoring it is assumed that student evaluation of tutors followed by consultation will improve tutoring.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

From the common stand of desirable characteristics of a tutor that was found in the literature, a list of behaviors expected of Brenau Learning Center Tutors was placed in the Learning Center Tutor's Manual. These behaviors are listed in Table One, page sixteen. These behaviors were organized by presentation of subject matter, strategies of instruction, and management of the learning environment.

Of the twenty-two institutions contacted in the second procedural step, twelve responded. All three individuals responded. In early August 1991, the first mailing of requests for evaluation forms used in other programs produced only two replies from institutions. A second mailing in mid-September produced replies from an additional ten institutions and three individuals. Eight respondents sent forms used to evaluate tutors in use at their institutions, three sent information regarding traits they expected in tutors, and one stated that her department did not work directly with tutors but provided inservice training about disabilities for the tutors. No form was specifically used with students with learning disabilities.

In all, over fifty-four percent of the institutions and one hundred percent of the individuals responded. Responses came from eight states representing all regions except the Northeast. The one college in the nation that exclusively serves students with learning disabilities did not respond, perhaps because their program is not a tutorial program. These forms were tabulated in the third procedural step.

Additionally, the Brenau College form for the student evaluation of professors was obtained and compared with the results listed in Table One. It was found that most items on the form used for the student evaluation of professors were concerned with management of the classroom and group presentation style. Students report that the wording was difficult and at times unclear. They requested that the evaluation form for tutors avoid similarly difficult words and be written in clear, concise terminology. The evaluation form for professors provided very little information helpful in developing the evaluation form for use in evaluating tutors.

Third, the behavioral items contained on the eight forms received from the mailing and the items listed by program directors as characteristics they wanted in tutors were tabulated and compared with the items listed in the Tutor's Manual. Table One shows the results of this tabulation of traits listed on the evaluation forms and by the directors of different programs.

Table 1

Traits To Be Evaluated and Number of Times Each Appeared on an Evaluation Form

Trait	Number
1. Tutor knows the material and is well prepared for the sessions.	9
2. Tutor uses a variety of ways to explain concepts.	5
3. Tutor is patient and understanding	4
4. Tutor holds student accountable for doing his/her own work.	5
5. Tutor helps students toward independence.	3
6. Tutor keeps student on task and demands preparedness.	5
7. Tutor is clear in expectations.	5
8. Tutor is punctual and regular in attendance and gives student undivided attention during the session.	7
9. Tutor checks for understanding.	6
10. Likes being a tutor.	1
11. Tutor encourages the student to improve his/her reading and study skills.	3
12. Tutor answers specific questions.	1
13. Tutor refers student to experts for help on problems outside the realm of the tutoring assignment.	2
14. Tutor praises student when the student has done well.	5

Behavioral items that were mentioned on forms or by directors of programs but were not a part of the Tutor's Manual were not included. Because the traits listed in the manual come directly from the literature review, they consist of the common strand of recognized traits needed in tutoring students with learning disabilities. The Tutor's Manual is the basis upon which tutors are trained and are expected to perform their duties. To evaluate them on behaviors not included in the Tutor's Manual would be an unfair evaluation. Additionally, no item not included in the manual was mentioned more than once. Often they represented stated personal opinions.

Traits mentioned three or more times were included in the rough draft of the evaluation form. The mean number of times an item was rated was 4.3 with a standard deviation of 2.1. By placing the cut off number at two, all items within one standard deviation below the mean would be included. There was only one item listed twice: Tutor refers student to experts for help on problems outside the realm of the tutoring assignment. It was decided that this trait was best evaluated by administrators; therefore, this item was omitted. The decision was made to include items mentioned three or more times, as there were no more items included twice.

Because students with learning disabilities often are poor readers, it was decided that behavioral items should be

easy to read and concise. Items were reworded in simple words and as concisely as possible.

As the fourth step, ten tutors, the Director of the Women's College Learning Center, and three persons from other programs read and commented on the form. They agreed that items should be as concise and simple to read as possible. To the item "is patient and understanding" was added the phrase "when I am having difficulty." Yamilkoski (1991) commented that he did not expect tutors to be patient and understanding when a student did not show up for tutoring. The item "knows the subject and is well prepared" was separated into two items, as was the item "is punctual and regular in attendance." It was observed that one might know the subject without being well-prepared and that a person could be late often, but regular in attendance. It was decided that "gives student his/her total attention" was unnecessary as tutors accept only emergency telephone calls while tutoring and are not allowed to bring distracting items to tutoring sessions.

As the next procedural step, the form was field tested on students. Ten Women's College students who had been tutored for at least four quarters, four college freshmen, and four Academy students participated. Seven reported that "praises me when my work is correctly done, or when I have done well in class" was the most important item. Six reported that "explains clearly" was the most important item. It was suggested that "helps student towards independence"

and "holds student accountable for doing his/her own work" be combined. Students requested "punctual" be changed to "on time" and an easier word than "demonstrates" be used. These last two suggestions were incorporated into the form as they made the items easier to read for the students. (See Appendix for evaluation form.)

The form was then reviewed with the 1991-1992 Tutors' Advisory Council and the Director of the Women's College Learning Center. They requested a statement at the top of the form to read, "How do you feel about the subject in which this person tutors you?" The tutors felt the evaluation might be biased by strong feelings about the subject. They agreed with the students that the items on independence and accountability should be combined. These changes were made. No other changes were requested.

Student evaluation of tutors was implemented the last week before finals during the Fall Quarter. Yamilkoski (1991) reports students were delighted to have the opportunity to evaluate their tutors and returns were excellent. Academy tutors were evaluated at the end on the Fall Semester and will be evaluated again at mid-term of Spring Semester.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion and Conclusions

Many of the traits needed to be an effective tutor that form a common strand though out the literature are also traits of effective teachers. The need for a variety of methods and materials is extremely important for students with learning disabilities both in the classroom and in tutoring. Patience and understanding when a student is experiencing difficulty are also essentials in teaching and tutoring. Some students with learning disabilities are experts at manipulating others to avoid doing the required work; therefore, a behavior (insists I do my own work) that is rarely stated on a teacher evaluation becomes very important in tutoring. Many of these traits, though shared with effective teaching, become doubly important when applied to students with learning disabilities.

The consistency of behavioral traits seen in the eight forms received indicates that the material would have been much the same if a much larger sample had been used. Perhaps the study would have been improved with a census sampling method, but the improvement would have been at a

considerable cost of time and money and may not have been cost effective.

Tutors were most helpful in their comments and were accepting of the process. They appreciated an opportunity to give input and expressed that they felt the information obtained would be helpful to them. Several were using the form for self-evaluation as they critiqued it.

Students in the Learning Center programs showed considerable interest in the development of the form. Several made unsolicited appointments to critique the form; all students solicited for feedback were willing to use their free time to evaluate the form. They were very vocal as to the need for simple, easy-to-read wording. They commented on the difficulty of evaluating professors because they could not read the evaluation form. Some requests they made for additional items were not added as the requests went beyond the tutors' job descriptions and the policy manual. Overall, the students were delighted that they were going to be allowed to evaluate their tutors. Several commented that the form helped them to define students' responsibilities as well as the tutors'.

The Tutors' Advisory Council and the Director of the Women's College Learning Center were pleased that the form had been developed and had only minor suggestions. They approved the form with only the minor changes mentioned above.

Implications

This rating form provides a form for a valid evaluation of tutors by their students. It will provide information to both Learning Center Directors as to the level of expertise of the tutors and the satisfaction of students with their tutors. This evaluation form fulfills a frequently expressed request of the Tutors' Advisory Council (Tutor's Advisory Council, 1990, 1991).

By regularly using this rating form, The Learning Centers' directors can provide their tutors with information as to how the students view their tutoring expertise and may offer appropriate in-service training. This information can be used to improve the quality of tutoring, to make personnel decisions, and to communicate with parents, educational consultants, and accreditation teams regarding the expertise of the tutors in the programs.

Recommendations

First, the students should evaluate all tutors at mid-term, each term. If problems are identified as a result of this evaluation, the Directors of the Learning Centers should consult immediately with the tutor and may need to negotiate with the tutor and student to solve the problem(s). If no problems requiring major attention are identified, the Directors of the Learning Centers should then consult with tutors regarding their evaluations on a yearly basis. Because some tutors only tutor one or two

students per quarter, anonymity would be lost if the consultations were held each quarter or semester.

On a yearly basis, before the consultation, each tutor should use the form as a self-evaluation. A comparison of the self-evaluation and the students' evaluations can be a major tool in improving instruction. As data is available, reliability studies should be made which compare the consistency of ratings of the same tutor by different students.

The regular use of this form can provide a major tool for the improvement of tutoring at both Brenau Women's College and at Brenau Academy Learning Centers. Student evaluations combined with consultations can result in better tutoring and more satisfied students.

On a yearly basis, the Tutors' Advisory Council should review the form and revise it as needed. As needs and tutors change, the form may need to be changed.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX
FORM FOR STUDENT'S EVALUATION OF TUTORS

Tutor's name. _____

Circle how you feel about the subject in which this person tutors you? Love it, Like it, It's O. K., Don't like it, Hate it.

Please circle the appropriate number to describe how you feel about your tutor.

My tutor:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Sometimes Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. knows the subject he/she tutors.	5	4	3	2	1
2. is well prepared.	5	4	3	2	1
3. uses a variety of methods and materials to help me understand the subject.	5	4	3	2	1
4. shows patience and understanding when I am experiencing difficulty.	5	4	3	2	1
5. insists I do my own work and holds me responsible for my choices.	5	4	3	2	1
6. insists that I come to tutoring prepared.	5	4	3	2	1
7. encourages me to improve my reading, organizational, and study skills.	5	4	3	2	1
8. checks regularly to be sure I am understanding the material.	5	4	3	2	1
9. praises me when my work is correctly done, or when I have done well in class.	5	4	3	2	1
10. is punctual to tutoring sessions.	5	4	3	2	1
11. is regular in attendance.	5	4	3	2	1

Circle your overall rating for your tutor.
Excellent, Above average, Average, Below average, Poor.

IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS, PLEASE WRITE THEM ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE